

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. in Waterfront Park. In his remarks, he referred to Jim McKune, volunteer carpenter; Bill Long, supervisor, bureau of maintenance; Steve Barrett, structural engineer; Gov. John A. Kitzhaber of Oregon; and Mayor Vera Katz of Portland.

Statement on the Interim Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses

February 14, 1996

I am pleased to accept the interim report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses. Dr. Joyce Lashof and the Committee members have made an impressive start on helping to ensure that we are doing all we can both to determine the causes of the illnesses Gulf war veterans are suffering from, and to provide effective medical care to those in need.

I am pleased that the Committee's interim report recognizes the serious efforts underway in the administration to restore these men and women to good health. I know that the Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, and Veterans Affairs will review the recommendations contained in this report and will continue the research, outreach, and medical programs needed to improve the lives of Gulf war veterans and their families.

I have asked Secretary William Perry, Secretary Donna Shalala, and Secretary Jesse Brown to develop an action plan for implementing the recommendations in the interim report. I am also asking the Departments to continue their record of full cooperation with the Advisory Committee as it prepares its final report over the next 10 months.

As I said last March when announcing my intention to establish the Advisory Committee, 5 years ago we relied on these Gulf war veterans to fight for our country; they must now be able to rely on us to try to determine why they are ill and to help restore them to full health. We are all indebted to the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses for its contribution to this critical task. I look forward to reviewing their final recommendations later this year.

Remarks on Departure from Boise, Idaho

February 14, 1996

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

On the ground, we are doing what needs to be done not only now, in the next few days, but for as long as it takes, until the people there are back on their feet and back to normal.

Let me also say that, as I'm sure all of you know, this has been a long day for me, but it's been a very rewarding one, even though I've seen a lot of sad and heart-breaking things. And not only in my conversations here but in my trip to Oregon and to Washington, I've seen a lot of loss, but I've also seen what happens when the American people work together in a spirit of genuine community and when people exhibit individual acts of courage and kindness that seem to overwhelm the dimensions of even the worst tragedy. And I have seen that as well.

I think the lesson that I have learned more than any other in 3 years and a few days as President is that when this country works together, we never lose. And when we permit ourselves to be divided, we often wind up being less than we ought to be.

I thank again everybody here in the northwestern part of our country for what I have seen today, for the work that they have done. And I want to say again specifically to the people of Idaho, I will follow up on the suggestions that we have gotten. I look forward to working with you. And I hope, as the members of your congressional delegation suggested to me in there, Senator Kempthorne in particular, that maybe the model of cooperation that we've seen in dealing with this flood can become a model for other kinds of cooperation in the future, so that Americans everywhere feel that their Government is a partner in a common endeavor to help individuals and families and communities make the most of their God-given capacities.

Thank you. Good luck, and we'll be at work on this immediately. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:50 p.m. at the Idaho National Guard Ramp at Boise